

AMERICAN COLLEGE of CARDIOLOGY



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September 4, 2001

The Honorable
John Dingell
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Dingell:

On behalf of the 26,000 members of the American College of Cardiology (ACC), I am pleased to offer the ACC's support of the "FamilyCare Act of 2001."

The ACC is deeply concerned about the number of people in this country who lack health insurance. In fact, the ACC has made the uninsured its top legislative priority. Earlier this year, the ACC participated with Families USA in a press conference that highlighted the implications for people with heart disease when they are without health insurance. The study found that people with heart disease are 2.5 times more likely than the insured not to have a regular source of health care and four times more likely not to receive care because they cannot afford it. There are five million people in this country with heart disease or hypertension who do not have health insurance – only a fraction of the overall number of uninsured.

Last year, members of the ACC developed a list of guiding principles on health system reform and the uninsured. Those principles emphasize the need to secure health insurance coverage for the lowest income children and families first by expanding upon the current state-based safety net infrastructure, including extending eligibility for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The ACC supports the "FamilyCare Act" because it is our belief that expanding SCHIP and Medicaid to parents of children eligible or enrolled in these programs, as outlined in your bill, will go a long way toward providing health care coverage to all low-income Americans. It is also our hope that by expanding SCHIP to parents, it will have the positive consequence of getting more eligible children enrolled in the program.

In addition to our support of the expansion of public health programs, the ACC also supports refundable tax credits for the purchase of health care insurance. The ACC believes that the expansion of public health programs and the availability of a refundable tax credit for low-income individuals and families go "hand-in-hand." While we realize that funds are limited, the ACC is hopeful that lawmakers will reach agreement on a proposal to expand health coverage to more Americans by utilizing the \$28 billion set aside in the FY 02 budget specifically for that purpose.

The ACC thanks you for your attention to this important issue and looks forward to working with you. I hope you will not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance. In the meantime, should you have any questions, contact Camille Sorosiak at (301) 897-2620.

Sincerely,

Douglas P. Zipes, M.D., F.A.C.C.
President

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